United Nations A/59/PV.48

General Assembly
Fifty-ninth session

Official Records

48th plenary meeting
Monday, 1 November 2004, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ping ..... (Gabon)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Sevilla Somoza (Nicaragua), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 2.45 p.m.

Agenda item 14 (*continued*)

Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the International Atomic Energy Agency (A/59/295)

Draft resolution (A/59/L.18)

The Acting President: The General Assembly will continue its consideration of agenda item 14, entitled "Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency". Members will recall that the General Assembly concluded debate on this item this morning.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/59/L.18. Before giving the floor to the speakers in explanation of vote before the vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Kim (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I am going to make a statement on behalf of my delegation on our position on the draft resolution entitled "Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency".

First, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is not a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency and is not a State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The Democratic People's Republic of Korea broke away from IAEA in the early 1990s because the Agency had abandoned the principle of equity, reducing itself to a political tool of the super-Powers; and last year the Democratic People's Republic of Korea withdrew from the NPT in order to defend the supreme interests of the nation. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has no relations with either IAEA or NPT, and it is irrelevant for IAEA to report on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in its annual report.

Second, the draft resolution entitled "Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency" is aimed at misleading the public regarding the nuclear issue of the Korean Peninsula in order to exert pressure on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The IAEA is crying that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is continuing its non-compliance with the safeguards agreement. Japan is claiming that the nuclear programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a threat to peace and security in Northeast Asia, while the United States nuclear weapons deployed on the Japanese islands and targeted at the Democratic People's Republic of Korea serve peace and security. In addition, certain other countries are

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saying that the withdrawal of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from the NPT and its nuclear programme are challenges to the non-proliferation regime.

However, all those arguments are based on the reversed logic of putting the cart before the horse, intentionally turning away from the intrinsic nature of the nuclear issue of the Korean Peninsula. The nuclear issue of the Korean Peninsula is the direct outcome of the hostile United States policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It is a political and military question to be settled between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States of America. If the United States had not brought nuclear weapons onto the Korean Peninsula, and if the United States had not threatened a pre-emptive nuclear strike against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the nuclear issue and the withdrawal of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from NPT would not have cropped up.

From the Agency's approach to the recently exposed secret nuclear experiment of South Korea, we have become even more aware of the injustice and double standards of the IAEA and of certain other countries that feign concern over the nuclear issue of the Korean Peninsula. How can we count on them regarding questions of the supreme interests of the State? My delegation thinks that if IAEA and certain member countries really care about resolving the nuclear issue of the Korean Peninsula, they should shake off their prejudice, look at the question squarely, and urge the United States to give up its hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

As for the uranium enrichment programme, which is mentioned in the report, it is a fabrication of the United States created in order to lay the blame for the nuclear issue of the Korean Peninsula at the feet of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The allegation that a secret uranium enrichment programme exists, like the pre-emptive strike strategy, is characteristic of the United States in its self-righteousness, unilateralism and bellicosity. Figuratively speaking, the former is based on the logic that if you repeat lies, they will become truth, while the latter is based on the assumption that if the pedestrian across the street looks like he is going to strike you, you strike him. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is maintaining a high level of vigilance against that kind of mentality and manoeuvring of the United States.

The United States aggression towards Iraq teaches us a grave lesson. The United Nations inspection team, lead by the IAEA, searched the whole territory of Iraq for nearly 10 years, including the presidential palaces, but did not give any confirmation that Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction. The United States, clinging to that, invented the threat of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and thus justified its war of aggression against Iraq.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has already made it clear that, if the United States renounces, in a practical manner, its hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, including the nuclear threat, it is willing to scrap its nuclear deterrence accordingly. It is the consistent position of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to hold fast to the ultimate goal of the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and to settle the nuclear issue peacefully through talks and negotiations.

The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, based on this point of view, will vote against the draft resolution, because it is not intended to contribute to resolving the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula.

The Acting President: As you know, we have already heard the only speaker in explanation of vote before the vote. The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/59/L.18. Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I would like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have also become sponsors of A/59/L.18: the Philippines and Nicaragua.

A recorded vote has been requested. We shall now begin the voting process.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Chile, China, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras,

Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia and Montenegro, Seychelles, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Yemen, Zambia

Against:

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Draft resolution A/59/L.18 was adopted by 123 votes to 1 (resolution 59/18).

[Subsequently, the delegations of Cape Verde, Eritrea, Georgia, Mauritius, Tajikistan and Viet Nam informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour.]

The Acting President: Several representatives have requested to exercise the right of reply. May I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and five for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Kitaoka (Japan): Japan would like to exercise the right of reply to the statement in explanation of vote made by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In his explanation, the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea said that the United States nuclear weapons were targeted at the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. That is totally untrue. As the only nation that has suffered the scourge of the atomic bomb, Japan is fully committed to the renunciation of the option of possessing nuclear weapons under relevant international treaties, including, inter alia, the non-proliferation treaty (NPT), and has consistently maintained its three non-nuclear principles of not possessing nuclear weapons, not manufacturing them and not allowing them to enter Japan.

Mr. Chun (Republic of Korea): I would also like to exercise the right of reply to the statement of the representative of North Korea. My delegation rejects the North Korean representative's characterization of the nuclear experiments conducted by some scientists in my country. As we have made clear on a number of occasions, including during the general debate of the General Assembly in our Foreign Minister's statement, those experiments were isolated laboratory-scale research activities that a few scientists conducted on their own for purely scientific purposes. They have nothing whatsoever to do with a weapons programme.

Furthermore, even though the Republic of Korea maintains the sixth largest civil nuclear industry in the world and depends on nuclear energy for 40 per cent of its supply of electricity, we do not have any enrichment or reprocessing facilities. We do not have any clandestine nuclear programmes as the North Korean delegate has alleged.

Despite the compelling economic imperative to reduce our dependence on imported nuclear fuel, we maintain the policy of voluntarily abstaining from the possession of enrichment or reprocessing facilities solely in the interests of the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Scientific research for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy is a fundamental right that all parties to the NPT are guaranteed under article IV of the treaty.

Although the experiments previously referred to should have been conducted with the proper authorization of my Government and been reported to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in a timely manner, the amount of nuclear material involved is too trivial to have any relevance to proliferation. Moreover, the disclosure of those research activities resulted from my Government's political determination to accept the new safeguards standards set forth in the additional protocol to the IAEA safeguards agreement, under which we declare all our past nuclear activities down to the level of scientific experiments involving milligram units, and we thus have rectified any inadvertent reporting lapses. Therefore, there should be no doubt left whatsoever regarding my Government's firm commitment to nuclear non-

proliferation norms, and we are providing full cooperation with the IAEA to rectify any past reporting lapses.

Finally, if North Korea does exactly as we have done, and accepts the highest standards of nuclear transparency, much of the international concern about North Korea's nuclear programme will be resolved.

Mr. Kim (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): First, I am going to reply to the Japanese representative. The Japanese representative, and Japan generally speaking, tries very hard to cover up its ulterior motives with its three principles or by referring to Japan's sacrifices from that nuclear bomb attack. Actually, Japan, while approving the three principles, allows nuclear weapons of the United States to come and go through Japanese ports. Also, on the Japanese islands there are many United States military bases that are targeted against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The Japanese representative cannot cover up all that reality.

Second, as for the South Koreans, I told the truth. The South Koreans have done this secret experiment and we know that they have tried to develop nuclear weapons since the 1970s. And this experiment, which was recently disclosed, was done in the 1980s. How can we trust their commitment to the international community?

Mr. Chun (Republic of Korea): I do not want to enter into a prolonged debate on nuclear issues or the allegations raised by the North Korean delegate in this forum. However, my delegation wishes to make the point that we find it absurd that the most egregious and determined proliferator known to the world is abusing this session to present a grossly distorted and exaggerated allegation about my country's nuclear research activities, which have, as I said earlier, no relevance to proliferation at all. What North Korea has to do first is dismantle its nuclear weapons programme entirely and accept the highest safeguard standards set forth by the additional protocol before it can consider itself qualified to criticize other countries' peaceful nuclear research activities.

Mr. Kim (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Our nuclear programme is already well known to the world. So, we are now trying to solve this with the United States. This has come up because of the United States hostile policy of nuclear threat. As for the South Korean nuclear programme, it had not been known until recently. I think it is very dangerous since they are boasting of having the sixth largest developed nuclear facilities. To this day it is not known how dangerous it is. Ours is known. South Korea's is unknown.

Mr. Kitaoka (Japan): Japan will not repeat our point because our message is very clear and is understood by 99 per cent of the membership of the United Nations.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 14?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 26

The situation in Central America: progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development

Report of the Secretary-General (A/59/307)

Mr. Hamburger (Netherlands): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro and the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

We are discussing today the ninth and final report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Guatemalan peace agreements. In addition to summarizing political developments during the past year, the report seeks to assess the overall progress in consolidating the peace. The evaluation comes at a critical juncture for Guatemala. The United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) will close after 10 years, during which its presence has been essential to the implementation of the accords. The departure of MINUGUA will thus mark the beginning of a new and necessary phase of the peace process. It will now be completely up to national actors to assume responsibility for the unequivocal implementation of the peace accords and to ensure adequate funding.

Over the past two years, MINUGUA has already phased down its operations and carried out a transition strategy designed to build national capacity. The efforts

were not only directed at key State institutions, such as the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman, but also at civil society organizations likely to remain engaged in peacebuilding efforts in the future.

The strategy also sought to guarantee adequate follow-up for priorities relating to the peace accords by the United Nations system in Guatemala. In that light, the European Union would be in favour of a further United Nations presence to strengthen the Government in its efforts to improve the human rights situation. In this respect, the establishment of an office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights would make an important contribution. Impunity and threats to human rights activists by clandestine and illegal groups also need special attention.

As is stipulated in the report, MINUGUA used the final period to reinforce the peace agenda with the new authorities, which took office in January 2004. The Mission produced a comprehensive set of policy recommendations and reviewed them with senior Government officials, governors, mayors, legislators, justice officials and leaders of civil society. During his visit to Guatemala in May 2004, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Sir Kieran Prendergast, underscored to those actors that the peace accords should remain Guatemala's basic blueprint for development. The European Union would like to add its voice to that message.

Meanwhile, continued support by the donor community is important. The contributions made over the years by the Group of Friends to the Peace Process and by the members of the Dialogue Group have been invaluable. While expressing gratitude for those contributions and for the support for MINUGUA over the years, the European Union hopes that we will all remain engaged with peace accords-related projects and remain in a close political dialogue with the Guatemalan Government.

Ms. García Guerra (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): First and foremost, my delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for the very comprehensive and detailed report on the implementation of the peace agreements in Guatemala and the work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA).

My delegation looks forward with the same interest to the additional report that the Secretary-General will be presenting in the months ahead, pursuant to the request made by the General Assembly in resolution 58/238. That report will mark the closing of the Mission after 10 years in operation. It will surely also serve as a report on lessons learned.

As a neighbour and a friend of Guatemala, a country that has participated in a variety of good offices and reconciliation efforts in the Central American region and a member of the Group of Friends to the Peace Process in Guatemala, Mexico has been closely following the work that MINUGUA has been doing over its 10 years of existence. As long as the people, the Government and the political forces of that country felt that the Mission's presence was useful and necessary, Mexico supported the renewal of the Mission's mandate.

As the Secretary-General's report well points out,

> "Through its verification, good offices, technical cooperation and public information, MINUGUA has made countless contributions, helping over the years to remind Guatemalans of the commitments they have made and to keep the country on the path of peace." (*A/59/307, para. 69*)

However, MINUGUA had to come to an end and yield to a phase in which national stakeholders would become the main actors responsible for overseeing and ensuring compliance with the peace accords. In this new phase, Guatemala will continue to enjoy the support of the United Nations and our support as a member of the international community.

During this transition period, the symbolic relaunching of the peace accords, which President Oscar Berger undertook when he took office less than a year ago, is of great significance. With the help of MINUGUA, over the last 10 years the Government and the society of Guatemala have made many major advances. Among other things, an end was put to more than three decades of armed conflict and human rights violations perpetrated or supported by the State. The reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian life was completed. The military was dramatically reduced in size, as was the military budget. The Presidential General Staff was dismantled. In general, civilian control over the armed forces has been strengthened. Notable progress has been made in promoting and protecting human rights. Important legislative reforms in the area of elections and political parties have been adopted, in addition to laws for decentralization and laws against discrimination. Today, Guatemala has a

democratic system and a mature civil society that is ever vigilant about compliance with the peace agreements.

However, in his report, the Secretary-General also underscores that some of the commitments of the Government and Guatemalan society as a whole are still outstanding. We believe that those commitments must be fulfilled for the country to achieve sustainable peace based on a democratic and fair society. Those commitments include compensation for victims of human rights violations perpetrated by the State during the armed conflict, strengthening of the rule of law, greater progress in the recognition and respect of the rights of indigenous peoples and their participation in society and greater progress on tax reform, which has become a matter of urgency.

Some of those challenges are similar to those faced by other countries in Central America, including my own. For that reason and because of the geographical, historical and cultural ties that Mexico shares with Guatemala, there is enormous potential for cooperation between the Governments of our two countries in the post-MINUGUA phase that is about to begin, aside from the cooperation that already exists at the regional level.

For example, one priority of the Government of President Berger is to work for Guatemala's full adherence to all instruments of international human rights law and, more specifically, to promote the establishment in Guatemala of a local office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. That issue is being debated in the Congress. We are also aware that the United Nations would consider such an office to be a fundamental instrument for continuing the job of verification on human rights — which to date has been done by MINUGUA — and for supporting national human rights institutions. Mexico has an office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in its own territory, and we are most willing to share with the Government of Guatemala our experience with that office.

My delegation intends to submit to the Assembly a draft resolution on the occasion of the conclusion of MINUGUA's mandate and the beginning of a new phase in the peace process. We trust that this initiative will gain the support of the Group of Friends and other Member States, which, for years now, have supported this process.

Finally, I thank Mr. Tom Koenigs, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Guatemala for the job he has done in the final phase of the transition and the conclusion of the Mission. I also pay tribute to the entire staff of the Mission and the young people of Guatemala who were involved in the National Transition Volunteers Programme for their commitment to the peace process in Guatemala.

Mr. Skinner-Klée (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, we thank the Secretary-General for his ninth and final report on the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala, contained in document A/59/307. We reaffirm our gratitude to the Group of Friends of the Guatemalan peace process, which has supported us throughout the long process, monitoring the situation in Central America in general and that in Guatemala in particular. We especially thank the Government of Mexico, which, year after year, has facilitated the preparation of the draft resolution on this topic.

For many years now, at this time of the year, we have taken up the agenda item on the situation in Central America, including, of course, the situation in Guatemala. As is well known, the United Nations Verification Mission has operated in our country since 1994. Its original purpose was to verify implementation of a human rights agreement, but its mandate was expanded in December 1996 to assist the parties that signed the peace agreements by carrying out tasks of verification, facilitation, public information and good offices.

Those peace accords continue to be a work in progress, bringing great advances and seeing some setbacks. We believe that this is not the moment to apportion responsibility for the overall situation we face. Certainly, we agree with the report's view that in Guatemala the foundations for a promising future have been laid and that a democratic framework has been consolidated.

That was attested to by the general elections that took place in November and December of last year and gave clear proof of being an open, transparent and legitimate process. That is a considerable improvement in the political situation of Guatemala. Those elections enabled a peaceful and orderly transition to the coalition Government headed by President Oscar

Berger Perdomo, which is fully committed to implementing the peace agreements. The peace agreements are a substantial part of the agenda of our Government, along with solving the problem of the deeply felt needs of the population, which include the strengthening and the institutionalization of civil society. For that reason, in September 2004, President Berger stated,

> "My plan of government incorporates the peace agreements and defines their implementation as the commitment of the whole nation. As President of Guatemala, I endorse the principle that solid and lasting peace must be founded on participatory, social and economic development aimed at achieving the common good and responding to the needs of all our people, particularly those still living in situations of extreme poverty."

It is in this context that today we wish to thank all the Member States that made possible the extension of MINUGUA to 31 December of this year. As we said last year, this has allowed us to capitalize on the considerable investment in effort and resources made by the United Nations in supporting all Guatemalans in consolidating the peace process, democracy and sustainable development.

In Guatemala, despite the weakness of certain State institutions, we have made substantial progress in promoting the observance of human rights and building a more inclusive and tolerant society. Still, we are aware that, as the Secretary-General pointed out in his report, there are still daunting challenges ahead, which is why the Government of President Berger is committed to strengthening the national institutions that are preparing fully to take over the functions the Mission carried out and are reinforcing the national civil police and the national prison system.

It is in this spirit that we support an upgrading of the in-country office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as the link established with the United Nations for the purpose of combating organized crime by means of a commission to investigate illegal groups and clandestine security organizations in Guatemala. We are certain that the international community, particularly the countries that are members of the Group of Friends, will go on lending us their support for the work aimed at strengthening the institutions that promote the rule of law.

In conclusion, we wish to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, his team and the entire staff that was part of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala, which after 10 years of fruitful work, is seeing the end of its mandate, leaving behind a significant legacy in our country — a shining example of the kind of success that can be achieved through international cooperation in the interests of peace.

Mr. Dajer (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, I should like to thank the Secretary-General for having submitted his report in document A/59/307 of 30 August 2004 on the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA).

This December, after 10 years of operation, MINUGUA is programmed to be closed down. This marks the end of the verification phase in the work of the United Nations and the beginning of a new phase in the process, whereby all Guatemalans will be doing the work themselves. We are certain that Guatemala is ready to meet that challenge. I should like to stress that there is still a lot to be done and problems still to be dealt with. But, the situation today is far different from what it was in previous years.

A little while ago, Guatemala had democratic elections and it mastered the challenges of the past in a mature manner. During the months that followed the change of Government, as the Secretary-General's report shows, Guatemala showed that it could continue the work that MINUGUA had begun. We agree with the Secretary-General that the support of the community of donors, which is crucial for the immediate future, must continue. Colombia, as a friend of the peace process in Guatemala, welcomes the ushering in of a new phase in the reconciliation and peace process and in the consolidation of Guatemala's democratic institutions. We fully trust in the capability of national, regional and local authorities to continue the process begun by MINUGUA. We stress the need for continued international community support to be forthcoming in order to ensure the success of that process. This firm commitment to Guatemala is particularly important in fighting the crime and insecurity that Guatemala's democracy and economy must deal with.

Mr. Rock (Canada): I welcome this opportunity to take part this afternoon in this discussion as we mark the end of the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA). The Mission has been an excellent example of the important contribution that international peacekeeping missions can make in the consolidation of peace in a country that has been affected by conflict. The Mission played an important role in the strengthening of human rights in Guatemala and Canada is proud to have supported MINUGUA over the course of its mandate — both in terms of finances and through the participation of Canadian police and military personnel. Canada views MINUGUA's departure as a positive signal of the progress made in Guatemala since the signing of the 1996 peace accords.

There is no question that Guatemala today is a very different country. We believe that significant progress has been made in strengthening democracy and in addressing social inequities. Canada is particularly pleased with the strong direction given by the Berger Administration for renewed commitment with regard to the implementation of the peace accords, as well as the steps taken to acknowledge past wrongs and to promote reconciliation. We must, however, also recognize that significant challenges remain to be overcome in the effort to ensure full respect for human rights and equity and to improve security and access to justice for all Guatemalans.

(*spoke in French*)

In this context, Canada welcomes the Government's continued commitment to the establishment of a commission to investigate illegal armed groups. The creation of that commission is important and necessary not only for the safety and security of Guatemalan citizens, but also for the success of democratic institutions in the country. All Guatemalans should work together not just to establish this commission, but also to give it a strong mandate and operational capacity, which the country needs in order to create a corruption-free culture that can support democratic development.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada also encourages the Guatemalan Government to work with the United Nations on the early establishment of an office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Guatemala. Such an office would constitute an important step in consolidating the significant advances in human rights that have already been made.

In closing, let me use this occasion to reaffirm Canada's sincere commitment to working in partnership with our friends and our neighbours in the Americas in pursuit of a better future for all the nations of the hemisphere.

Mr. Løvald (Norway): Even though many years have past since the armed conflicts in Central America ended, the region is still facing a number of major challenges: the eradication of poverty, the consolidation of democracy and the safeguarding of human rights. Good governance, sustainable economic development and strengthening of the judicial systems continue to be key issues.

However, it is encouraging to see that the Governments of Central America are continuing, and even stepping up, their fight against corruption. Peaceful and transparent elections are now the rule rather than the exception in Central America and bear witness to the gradual consolidation of democracy in those countries. We commend the United Nations agencies and the Organization of American States (OAS) on their long-standing support for the election processes, to which Norway has also contributed, particularly in Guatemala, through the OAS. With the withdrawal of MINUGUA in December, the United Nations is closing the book on one of its most successful peacebuilding missions after 10 years in the field. We would like to commend both the Mission and the United Nations on that outstanding contribution to peace and development in Guatemala.

We are confident that the country is now in a good position to consolidate the peace process by implementing the peace accords. We would like to commend the President of Guatemala on his strong commitment to the peace accords and for the progress which his Government has made in such important areas as completing the reduction of the armed forces. We have no doubt that the peace accords will continue to serve as a road map and a national agenda for further development. However, new commitments and objectives are now on the national agenda, such as the Millennium Development Goals. We hope that the consultative group meeting, scheduled for the first half of next year, will look into those matters.

Although the final withdrawal of MINUGUA is a positive sign, there is a great need for the international

community to continue supporting the implementation of the peace accords. Guatemala is still a developing country in a post-conflict situation. It is important that there be adequate mechanisms in place for following this up after December of this year, particularly in the realm of justice and human rights. We fully agree with the Secretary-General's assessment that, in addition to the strengthening of the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman, the establishment of an office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is particularly important in connection with the departure of MINUGUA. Norway will continue its support for the strengthening of the justice sector, the national civilian police and the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman.

The Acting President: We have thus heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. The General Assembly has concluded this stage of its consideration of item 26.

The meeting rose at 3.40 p.m.